

Female Voice about Love and Affair in Alice Munro's Stories

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Abstract: This article describes Alice Munro's thoughts about the relation between woman and marriage, as reflected in three short stories, 1) "Floating Bridge", 2) "Nettles", 3) "What is Remembered", in short stories collection Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage (2001). In this research, the writer uses feminist theory, namely the gynocriticism proposed by Elaine Showalter. The analysis focuses on the psychoanalytic model to explain the psychology of women who are involved in the marriage but have an affair, as reflected in three main female characters in these stories, they are Jinny, the Narrator, and Meriel. The analysis concludes that, first, the social rules about marriage give a big psychological pressure to the main female characters. Secondly, woman needs an escape for having self-indulgence which, in this case, is the affair that can help them forget the problems temporarily. Thirdly, after getting married, family becomes the most important element in a woman's life. It is proved by the main female characters stop having an affair because they do not want to destroy their family.

Keywords: wife, pressure, escape, affair, gynocriticism.

Introduction

There are many female authors who have produced various good works. Through their writings, women do not only fight for their equality, but they also contribute to society and make achievements. As a matter of fact, there are thirteen female authors who have become the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature. Among those women is Alice Munro, who won The Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013, and became the thirteenth female author in the list. Alice Munro is known as a master of contemporary short story. Her unique style in writing stories has allowed her to gain various recognitions. One of her most critically acclaimed work is the short stories collection Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage. There are many stereotypes set upon women which violate women's rights. These stereotypes are made to inhibit the women from developing their ability so that they can always be objectified by men. Despite all the restraining rules from society, women cannot be stopped from living in their own way. Through Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage story collection, Munro shows that women are human beings who have their own ways to survive the society without being stuck on the rules made by men to inhabit them. Women are not afraid to ignore the rules in the society to get their desire and to pursue their dreams. This article presents the explanation of how women follow their intuition to pursue their desire in love, as reflected in three selected stories from Alice Munro's story collection Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage.

The writer analyses the personality, social life, and the process of the three female characters in Munro's short stories collection start to have an affair with the male characters that is new in their life circle before. These problems will be connected to the psychology and Munro's thoughts about women, marriage and love affair.

The first character is Jinny Lockyer from the story "Floating Bridge". Jinny Lockyer is described as a woman who has cancer and hopeless. The impact of her hopelessness is that she becomes lonely and keeps herself away from the society. Her loneliness is also caused by her husband who does not care about her and flirts with another girl whom they hire to work in their house.

Jinny's affair with Ricky is motivated by her disappointment to her husband and her life in general, which has been burdened by her illness. The feeling of hungry for attention makes Jinny commits an affair with Ricky. In addition to it, we see that Jinny's affair with Ricky has helped her realize that there is more to live, that she should live her days with lightheartedness instead of sadness, at least for the time given. The good point in this story is Jinny is not easily deceived with her wish that she will get a full attention, love, and joy from Ricky. She still keeps her mind clear and thinks that this affair does not good for her family. She willingly makes this affair as a temporary escape from her problem in family and social life.

The second character is the Narrator in "Nettles". She is a woman who has just divorced with her husband and currently has a new husband. The story flashes back after the divorce. She visits her friend in her family's summer villa and there she meets her long lost first love, Mike, who is the colleague of her friend's husband. Mike is now married and has two children. The meeting reminds the Narrator about the love she had for Mike when she was young. She, indeed, still keeps the feeling for him and the meeting develops the love for more; she imagines how it feels if Mike was her husband, and she hopes Mike to have the same feeling for her. The story shows that first love never ends. The Narrator already has several relationships with some other men, but she cannot find the same feeling as she feels for her first love. Her journey in looking for true love stops when she meets Mike again. She thinks that from Mike she will get what she wants. She needs someone who can make her comfortable just like her first love could. Thinking about Mike as her husband is enough for her to sooth the despair she feels after the divorce. However, the story shows that Mike does not love her (and never did) but he surely takes her as his good friend, because he tells her the story of his youngest child's tragic death that he never shared with others. Just like the first story, in this story the Narrator can control her desire of her first love. She keeps her mind clear and still thinks about her children. She does not only care about her family, but also pays attention to Mike's family. After realizing that Mike only takes her as a good friend, she decides to keep the feeling for herself and let go off her feeling to Mike. At the end, she gets married for the second time. The last character is Meriel from the story "What is Remembered". She is described as a happy wife who has a husband who cares and loves her. The reason that makes Meriel do an affair is because she has a boring marriage life. Even though she has a good husband and children who love her, she still cannot erase her boredom. She needs something that makes her life becomes more challenging. Then, when she meets Dr. Asher, her life changes. She finds an attention that she does not get from her husband. The affair between Meriel and Dr. Asher simply happens because she feels challenged to go out of her comfort zone for a while and feels something new. Then, the good point is that she also keeps her mind clear just like two characters in the previous two stories. Meriel does not want to destroy her family either. She decides to forget that affair and do not let other people know about that. Meriel feels that this affair will be her unforgettable challenging story that makes her forget her boring life. The three stories make the writer comes to a conclusion that women, whatever status and problems they face, share a similarity; they need affection. Woman is a creature who needs warmth and attention from people around her especially from a man who has become their partners. Even if they already get the attention from her partner, but if there is another man who gives them bigger attention, they will likely take that just because they feel more appreciated, as illustrated in "What is Remembered". The writer also finds that women commit affair because they have the reason. They have their own desire. In these three stories, we can see that consciously the women know that having an affair is a problem. They know that it can destroy everything they love, such as their husband and children. They also know that the affair can also destroy their partner's family if he is already married. However, unconsciously the women need someone who can make them feel comfortable. Fortunately, these three female main characters also have knowledge of social norm in their conscious mind which control and limit their desire. They obey the norms in the society. Three female characters above show that they do not want to make problem with the social norms. They consciously realize that they cannot insist to keep the relationship longer. These conscious minds help these women to not lose control. Their affairs seem to be a momentary escape from the problem they face in their marriage. All of the female

characters do not continue their love affair and decide to forget the affair to keep their family safe. They do not want to hurt their family, especially their children. Women do not follow their desire without thinking the effect that will happen after that.

Conclusion

Munro tries to show the readers several things. Firstly, the society rules about marriage give a big psychological pressure for the main female characters. Secondly, woman needs an escape as self-indulgence which in this case is the affair which can help woman to forget her problems temporarily. Thirdly, family is the most important element in woman's life. For this reason, the main female characters stop having an affair because they do not want to destroy their family.

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